



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

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By HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

A SPY.

"Well, we succeeded in driving the British back from Charleston."

"Yes; so we did, but Dick Slater tells me that Prevost left a garrison at Beaufort, as he was retreating to Savannah."

"How large a garrison is it?"

"About four hundred men."

"Four hundred, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, why not go down there and dislodge them?"

"I have thought of making the attempt."

"I believe I would do so if I were you. We ought not to let the British retain a foothold in South Carolina if we can help it."

"So it seems to me."

"It ought to be a fairly easy matter to dislodge the red-coats from Beaufort."

"I will send for Dick Slater, and see what he thinks about it."

"That is a good idea. He has good judgment regarding such matters."

"So he has, and he has just returned from following the British and keeping watch of them as they retreated."

It was midsummer of the year 1778. The patriots occupied Charleston, South Carolina, and the British, who were at Savannah, Georgia, under General Prevost, had made an unsuccessful attempt to attack Charleston, and had been forced to retreat back to Savannah.

General Lincoln, the commander of the patriot force at Charleston, and Count Pulaski, the Polish patriot, were seated in a room in the building occupied as headquarters, and were discussing the situation. As he spoke of sending for Dick Slater, General Lincoln struck a bell, and an orderly appeared at the door.

"Send Dick Slater, the captain of the 'Liberty Boys,' here at once," ordered the general.

The orderly saluted and withdrew.

The two officers continued their conversation, and fifteen minutes later the door again opened, and the orderly announced:

"Dick Slater."

A handsome, bright-faced young man of perhaps nineteen or twenty years entered the room, and saluted.

"Ah, Dick, I am glad to see you," said General Lincoln. "Be seated."

He motioned toward a chair, and Dick took the seat indicated.

"Well, Dick, I wish to ask you a few questions," said the general.

"I shall be glad to answer them, sir," was the reply.

"You have just returned from your trip south in the wake of Prevost's army, and I would like to ask you what your opinion is regarding the possibility of dislodging the garrison that was left at Beaufort."

The "Liberty Boy" was silent a few moments, and then said, slowly:

"Of course the garrison can be dislodged if a sufficient force is sent against it, sir."

"What would you consider a sufficient force?"

"Well, I should say twice the number of men the British have."

"And they have about four hundred?"

"Yes, sir."

"We would have to send seven or eight hundred men, then?"

"Yes, sir."

The general was silent for a few moments, thinking, and then said:

"Well, I guess I can afford to send that number."

"Yes," said Count Pulaski, "there does not seem to be any probability that another move will be made against Charleston."

"Not soon at any rate."

"If you decide to make the attempt to dislodge the garrison at Beaufort, myself and 'Liberty Boys' will wish to be of the force that goes, sir," said Dick.

"Yes, you shall be of the force, Dick. Indeed, I shall depend on you to a great extent, as the greater number of the men I shall send will be militia, and it will be necessary to have some veterans along to show them how to fight."

"We are ready to start on the expedition at any moment, sir," said Dick.

"Very well. I will begin making arrangements to send the force against Beaufort, and likely it will start in the morning."

"Very well, sir."

"As you go out, tell Colonel Campbell I wish to see him, Dick," said the general, and Dick said, "Very well, sir," and rising, saluted and took his departure.

"A fine fellow, that, General Lincoln," said Count Pulaski.

"Yes, and one of the bravest, most daring fellows in the patriot army."

"He is, indeed."

"The 'Liberty Boys' may always be depended on."

"Yes, they are reliable, and do not know the meaning of the word fear."

"You are right. If General Washington had a few thousand like them he could drive the redcoats off our domains."

"Yes; they would have to leave our shores in a hurry."

As Dick passed out into the hall he saw a man walking rapidly away toward the entrance to the building. The man was not the orderly, and there was something in his appearance that attracted Dick's attention and aroused his suspicions.

The fellow acted as if he felt that he was an intruder, as if he realized that he was where he had no business to be; and a closer look from Dick's keen eyes made the youth think that it might be possible the fellow was not a friend to the patriot cause.

"There are a lot of Tories in Charleston," said the youth to himself, "and that fellow looks like he might be one of that sort."

As the thought came to him Dick increased his pace, and drew nearer to the fellow.

The man in question glanced back over his shoulder, saw that Dick was overtaking him, and seemingly became alarmed, for he increased his pace to a very rapid walk.

This was noted by Dick, and it increased his suspicions.

"I'll wager that fellow has been up to some meanness," the youth thought. "Likely he has been spying. The chances are that he was listening at the door while I was talking with General Lincoln, and if that is the case he will try to get the news to the redcoats at Beaufort that we are

going to attempt to dislodge them—or, rather, he will do so if he is permitted."

The youth made up his mind that he would prevent the supposed spy from doing this, if such a thing were possible, and he increased his speed, and still continued to draw nearer and nearer the man.

The instant the fellow emerged from the door of the building he leaped away at a run.

Dick had been looking for some such move, however, and he bounded forward with the speed of a deer, and was out of the building and after the fugitive in an instant, almost

There were people passing along the street, and they paused and stared in open-mouthed amazement.

No one made any attempt to stop the fugitive, however, but got out of the way and gave him a clear track.

The youth wondered why this was, at first, but as he drew nearer he saw why it was.

The fugitive held a pistol in his hand, and it was the sight of the weapon that caused the pedestrians to step out to one side and give the fellow all the sidewalk.

"So that's the kind of chap you are, eh?" thought Dick. "A desperate fellow! That proves that you are a spy, and that you should be captured. Well, I'll do it, if such a thing is possible."

The youth kept a sharp lookout ahead for the sight of some patriot soldiers, with the intention of yelling to them to stop the fugitive; but as it happened no patriot soldiers were seen.

The supposed spy was leading the chase along streets that were not frequented by the soldiers.

The youth realized this fact, and his respect for the cunning of the fellow was increased.

"He is a dangerous man, I'll wager," he thought, "and that makes it all the more necessary that I should capture him."

Onward dashed pursued and pursuer.

Down one street, up another the chase went.

The fugitive was a good runner, and while Dick gained all the time, it was but slowly, and made quite a long chase of it.

Occasionally the fugitive glanced back, and as he saw his pursuer was drawing nearer and nearer, a desperate and determined look appeared on his face.

Closer and closer Dick drew, and presently was near enough so that he could see the fierce look on the man's face and in his eyes when he turned his head to look back.

"There's murder in those eyes of his," thought Dick. "I'll have to be careful when I close in on him, for he looks like a fellow who will shoot."

Another thing Dick realized was that they were getting to rather an unsavory quarter of the city.

They were nearing the water front, and it was frequented by all sorts of desperate characters. It was a place where a man's life was not safe after nightfall, but of course in the daytime it was not so bad.

Thought of danger to himself would never deter Dick later, however, and he kept up the chase with undiminished vigor.

Closer and closer he drew to the fugitive, and presently was almost near enough to enable him to reach out his hand and seize the fugitive.

The fellow glanced back over his shoulder, seemed to realize that he could not hope to escape by running, and whirling quickly, he fired point blank at the youth who had followed him so persistently.

Dick saw what was coming, and leaped to one side with lightning-like quickness that caused the fellow to miss him, the bullet taking effect in the leg of a man who at that moment stepped out of a low drinking dive, and causing him to give vent to a wild yell of pain, and go hopping round and around in a circle, giving vent to his anger and pain in language which it is better not to reproduce.

Having escaped the bullet, Dick made a quick leap for the fellow, who muttered a curse at having missed, and hurled the pistol at the youth's head.

Dick dodged the pistol, and the next instant was engaged in a fierce struggle with the fugitive.

The man fought desperately.

He realized, no doubt, that if he permitted himself to be made a prisoner and taken back to the patriot headquarters it would go hard with him, and he fought with all the energy that he could muster for the occasion.

He was a strong and athletic fellow, and Dick found considerable difficulty in handling him.

Dick was a skilled wrestler, and he made strong efforts to throw his opponent, but the fellow managed to balk each effort.

"I don't think you will do that," the fellow grated. "You are not going to put me down and make a prisoner of me if I can help it, and I think I can."

"We'll see about that," said Dick quietly, and he went at the fellow with renewed energy.

The sound of the pistol-shot had brought people swarming out upon the street from the dives and saloons of the water front, and soon a great crowd had surrounded the two. Dick did not like the looks of affairs. He realized that the people surrounding him were more likely to be

against him than for him, but he did not cease his efforts to overcome the fellow he suspected of being a spy.

"If I can make him a prisoner I may be able to frighten the crowd into letting me alone," he thought.

The spectators stood around and watched the struggle with eager interest. They seemed not to think of anything save to wonder which would be the victor, and several rough fellows laid wagers on this.

The youth's opponent was larger and heavier than Dick, and it looked as if he should have been stronger, but he was not. If anything Dick was the stronger, and he was much quicker in his movements, and more agile and supple, and the result was that, after the struggle had gone on for perhaps two minutes the youth succeeded in getting the hold he wished to secure.

The next instant the man's body was lifted high in the air, and was held there for an instant, poised on Dick's shoulder; then down the fellow's body came, and he struck on the hard ground with a force that knocked all the fight out of him for the time being.

The youth turned the man over on his face, pulled his arms together behind his back, and was proceeding to tie the wrists with his handkerchief, when suddenly half a dozen rough-looking men rushed forward from the midst of the crowd, and leaped upon his back, crushing him down upon the form of the half-dazed man he was trying to make a prisoner.

"We've got ye, young feller," cried one of the men, in a triumphant voice. "Ye might ez well giv' up without enny foolin'."

CHAPTER II.

A PRISONER.

But Dick Slater was not of the giving up kind.

He would give up only when forced to do so, not before.

He realized that he did not have much chance, as he was outnumbered six to one, and they had the advantage of having him down, but he would not yield without a struggle even then.

So he began struggling, and so fiercely did he resist that the six burly men were kept very busy for a few minutes.

The "Liberty Boy" even managed to get to his knees, once, and was rising up to his feet, with three of the men hanging around his neck, but one fellow, who had received a severe kick in the stomach and was angry as a re-

sult, drew a pistol and struck Dick a heavy blow on the head with the butt of the weapon.

The blow knocked the brave youth senseless, and he dropped to the ground as if shot, the three ruffians falling on top of him.

They hastened to scramble to their feet, however, and then, acting under the orders from the man who had gotten Dick into all the trouble—and who had regained his senses while the youth was struggling with the six—they tied Dick's hands, and lifting him, carried him into a doorway nearby, and up a flight of rickety stairs.

They passed along a hall, and entered a room at the rear of the building.

It was a good-sized room, and there were a number of chairs and a long table which stood in the middle of the floor.

One of the men closed and barred the door, and the four who were carrying Dick placed him at full length on the table.

Then from a closet at one end of the room the men brought forth black gowns, with hoods attached, there being holes cut for the mouth and eyes. These gowns they donned, and then seated themselves to await the youth's return to consciousness.

Presently Dick regained consciousness, and sat up and looked around him. He took in his surroundings at a quick, rapid glance.

The seven men were seated in a row, along the side of the room, and swinging his legs over the edge of the table on the side toward the men, Dick looked at them quietly. To their surprise he did not seem to be a bit awed or frightened. They were still more surprised when he spoke, for he said in a calm, matter-of-fact voice:

"I must compliment you fellows on your improved appearance. You look much better in those hooded gowns than you did without them."

"Why so?" asked the fellow Dick had chased, and who was indeed the head one of the gang.

"Because one does not see your ugly faces," was the cool reply.

An angry murmur went up from the men. It was plain that they did not fancy being spoken of in this fashion; then, too, they were disappointed because of their failure to awe the youth.

"You think you are smart, no doubt," remarked the man, sneeringly.

"Oh, no; that is something that any one would notice and think of."

"You are impudent and saucy," said the fellow, "but you will soon take that out of you."

"Indeed?" said Dick.

"Yes. Do you know who I am?"

"I haven't the least idea—except to say that I know you are a big rascal."

"Bah. I will tell you who I am." He paused, and glared at Dick fiercely through the holes in the hood.

"Go on; I'm listening," coolly.

"Very well. I am Ronald Royston."

The youth shook his head.

"I don't know any more than I did before," he said calmly. "I never heard of Ronald Royston."

"You never did?" in evident surprise.

"No."

"That is strange."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"You seem to think that you are a pretty big sort of man in this part of the country."

"And I am."

The youth shook his head and wrinkled up his eyebrow.

"I don't think anybody else besides yourself knows any thing about it," he said calmly.

"Just the same there are hundreds of people who know it."

"Can it be possible?"

If the fellow thought to awe or frighten Dick Slater he was badly fooled, and he began to realize this.

"Dick Slater, did you ever hear of an organization known as the 'Loyal Legion'?" the fellow asked.

The youth had heard rumors that there was such an organization in South Carolina, and had heard it even hinted that the headquarters of the organization was in Charleston, but he had not paid any attention to the rumor. Indeed, he had not thought the organization amounted to much. He nodded his head in assent, and said:

"Yes, I believe I have heard of such an organization."

"I thought so," in a tone of satisfaction. "Well, we in whose presence you stand are members of the Loyal Legion."

"But I'm not standing," said Dick drily. "I'm sitting on the table."

"Bosh. Flippancy will not help your case any, Dick Slater," the man cried. "If you but knew it you are in a serious predicament."

"Is that so?"

"It is."

"Why so? You will not dare injure me."

"Ha! think you that?" in a sneering tone. "And why, ray, will we not dare injure you?"

"For the reason that if you should do so my men would unt you down and wipe you out of existence."

"Ha, ha, ha! Wipe us out of existence, eh?"

"Yes."

"They would have to find us first, Dick Slater."

"They would find you, never fear."

"Bosh! They would never find us, and if you think that you can get me to change my plans regarding you, or stay my hand from inflicting injury upon you through talking of what your men might try to do you are mistaken."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; I have you here, a prisoner. I have you in my power."

"Temporarily."

"Bah! you are where your friends could not find you in a month's search, so I rather think you are more than temporarily in my power."

"But what do you want of me?"

"What did you want of me when you gave chase to me?"

The youth laughed, and said, easily:

"Oh, I just wanted to make your acquaintance, that is all."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, then you succeeded admirably in what you set out to do, for you are going to make my acquaintance—most thoroughly, too, before we get through with each other."

"I am glad to hear you say that."

The man who had said his name was Ronald Royston was silent for a few moments, during which time he eyed the youth keenly through the holes in the hood.

Finally he said:

"Your name is Dick Slater?"

The youth bowed.

"I judge that you know that," he said quietly, "so there is no need of denying it."

"Exactly; and as I know that you are a brave and daring fellow, I have made up my mind to give you a chance for your life."

The youth looked surprised, but not frightened.

"A chance for my life?" he asked.

"That is what I said."

"But surely my life is not in danger?"

"Dick Slater," in what was intended to be a very impressive tone; "you have no doubt had many adventures, have been in many dangerous situations, but never in your life have you been in as dangerous a situation as the one you are in now."

"Oh, you're just joking," said Dick.

"I am not."

"Oh, yes, you must be."

"No; I was never more serious in my life."

The youth shook his head. He was a good actor, and while he felt sure that the man spoke the truth, and that he was in danger, yet he was determined that they should not know he thought so, and simply said:

"I cannot believe it. You would not dare injure me."

"The members of the Loyal Legion dare do anything, Dick Slater," Royston said, almost fiercely. "If I say that you shall die, die you shall."

"Oh, that may be; but you won't say it," said Dick, with assumed carelessness.

"On one condition I will not."

"On one condition?"

"Yes, and one only."

"What is the condition?"

"That you take the oath of allegiance to the king, and become a member of the Loyal Legion."

Dick surprised the hooded men by giving utterance to a burst of ironical laughter.

"So that is the condition, is it?" he remarked, when he had done laughing.

"It is," in a fierce and sullen tone.

"And it is the only condition on which you will spare my life?"

"Yes. Do you consent?"

"Consent?" cried Dick, scornfully; "consent to take the oath of allegiance to the tyrant, King George, and henceforth take the side of the British against the brave Americans who are fighting for liberty and independence? Well, I guess that I do not consent. No, a thousand times no. Had I a hundred lives, instead of only one, I would yield them all up before I would be a traitor to my country, and take the oath of allegiance to a titled robber such as is your tyrant king."

The handsome face of the youth was flushed, and in his eyes glowed a fire such as the men facing him had never witnessed in the eyes of any man, and they stared at him in wonder. They were angered by the youth's words, however, and muttered threateningly.

"Let's kill the rebel, and be done with it, cap'n."

"Yes; he'll never come over to our side."

"Theer hain't no use uv wastin' enny more time on him."

"No, let's finish him, and have it over with."

Such were some of the exclamations from the men, and Royston said in a fierce, threatening voice:

"You had better think well before making a final decision, Dick Slater."

"The matter does not require an instant's thought," was the prompt reply. "There can be only one answer to such a proposition as you have made to me. As I have already said, if I had a hundred lives to lose instead of one, I would give them all before I would be a traitor to my country and her people."

"Very well; that settles the matter then, and seals your doom," said Royston sternly. "You shall die."

Had Dick's hands been free he would have attacked the seven scoundrels and made a fight for his life, but with his arms bound he realized that it would be folly, and in the hope that something might turn up to be to his advantage, he decided to remain quiet and await further developments. He did not think that the men would dare put him out of the way right there in the room. "They will certainly take me away to some other spot," he thought, "and while they are doing this I may manage to escape."

But he was mistaken. The members of the Loyal Legion were men who did not believe in putting off anything that needed doing.

"Are you all decided regarding this matter of putting the rebel out of the way?" asked Royston.

"Yes, yes," was the reply.

"And the decision is that he must die?"

"It is," in chorus again.

"At once?"

"At once."

"And here?"

"Here."

"In the usual manner?"

"In the usual manner."

The threatened youth listened to this with interest. "So they have put other patriots to death, have they?" he said to himself. "Well, I am glad that I have learned this, for if I should be so fortunate as to make my escape, I shall try to hunt these scoundrels down, and knowing that they are really murderers, I shall have no scruples about putting them to death."

Ronald Royston took up a hat, placed six slips of paper in it, and said:

"The man who draws the blank slip will be the executioner, as has been the custom. Draw."

One after the other the six men drew out the slips of paper, and when all had drawn one held up his hand.

"You are the one, eh?" exclaimed Royston. "Very good. Do your work, and see to it that you do it well."

"I'll do it well, never you fear," said the man in a fierce,

deadly voice, and drawing a long, wicked-looking knife from under his gown he advanced toward Dick, who still sat on the table, his legs hanging down and almost reaching the floor.

The youth met the gaze of the would-be executioner, and the two stared at each other as if fascinated, though there was a glare in the eyes of the man with the knife that told the youth he need expect no mercy at the fellow's hands.

"He means to kill me," thought Dick. "I can see it in his eyes. And what can I do, with my arms tied, and so many more men to render the scoundrel aid if he should need it? Nothing, I fear. It looks as if my time has come."

With his eyes fixed on those of the would-be murderer, and every nerve strained to its utmost tension, Dick Slater waited for the man to strike.

CHAPTER III.

RESCUED.

Two or three steps forward and the man was ready to strike.

He drew back his arm, and in another instant the knife would have been driven home; but Dick was not willing to give up his life without a struggle, and as he saw the man was on the point of striking, he gave the fellow a terrible kick in the stomach, hurling him backward against the wall whence he toppled forward to the floor. The knife had dropped from his hand, and he lay there gasping for breath.

The other scoundrels stood there, staring in amazement and then exclamations of anger escaped their lips.

"He's half-killed Sam!"

"Thet wuz er turrible kick!"

"Let's finish him, cap'n."

"He's altogether too tricky."

Such were the exclamations, and then the leader of the band cried:

"Go for him, boys. Finish him up, and have done with it."

The five men drew knives and leaped forward, but Dick was off the table like a flash, and had it between himself and his would-be murderers.

"Oh, that won't do you any good," cried one. "You might as well stand still and take your medicine."

"Oh, no," said Dick. "I will fight to the last gasp."

The men ran around the table, and were on the point of

striking upon Dick when there came a crash against the floor.

It shivered and shook, but held.

The men paused and stood, knives in hand, and stared at the door, and then at one another.

"Who kin et be?" said one.

"Et hain't no frien's uv our'n, er they wouldn' bump in ther door so hard," from another.

"Open the door," called a voice. "Open it or we'll break it down."

"Hurrah, it's my 'Liberty Boys'!" cried Dick. "Break the door down, Bob."

Cries of alarm and consternation escaped the lips of the town men.

"Quick!" cried Royston. "We must get out of here. Follow me."

He bounded toward one corner of the room, and lifting trapdoor, hastened down a flight of steps.

His men hesitated, looked at Dick as if inclined to wait long enough to finish him, and then as there came another crash against the door, they broke for the trap-door, and followed their leader, the fellow Dick had kicked in the stomach being last; indeed it was with difficulty he was able to make his way along.

Presently the clatter of the fleeing man's feet ceased, the noise being followed by the slamming of a door, and Dick understood that they had made their escape.

"Hurry and break the door down, Bob," Dick called out, and then, crash, and the door flew off the hinges, and Bob Estabrook and Sam Sanderson, two of the "Liberty Boys" fairly fell into the room.

"Where are the scoundrels, Dick?" cried Bob, looking around the room, his hand on his pistol.

"They escaped down that stairway, yonder, Bob."

"They did, eh?" and he ran over and looked down the stairway.

"Yes; say, Sam, where are the rest of the boys?"

"Bob and I are all that are here."

"Just you two?"

"Yes."

"And there were seven of the scoundrels in here. It's lucky they didn't know there were but two of you."

"I guess you are right, Dick."

"Indeed I am; and now, Sam, cut the rope that binds my arms, so I may be able to defend myself to some advantage if the scoundrels come back."

"Do you think they'll come back, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"What makes you think so?"

"They'll learn downstairs that there were but the two of you, and will come back to wipe out all three of us."

"Well, they'll have a hard job of it, I can tell you," said Bob, grimly.

"That's right," coincided Sam, as he cut the rope binding Dick's arms.

"There; that feels better," said Dick, with satisfaction as he moved his arms about to get the blood circulating once more. "Jove, I feel as if I could thrash the whole gang myself."

"Have you your weapons, Dick?" asked Sam.

"Yes; they didn't take them away from me, thank goodness."

At this instant the sound of angry voices was heard.

"They are coming," exclaimed Sam.

Bob leaped forward and slammed the trap-door shut, and pushed a small iron bar into place, which was calculated to hold the trap-door firmly down.

"Now we can all three give our undivided attention to this door," he said, indicating the one he and Sam had burst open.

"I think we shall be able to keep the scoundrels at bay," said Dick.

"Yes, if there are only seven of them," said Sam.

"Possibly they may have been joined by more of their gang," said Dick.

"We'll soon know," said Bob. "They are coming up the stairs."

Soon the footsteps were heard coming along the hall, and from the sound the youths judged that there must be at least a dozen of the scoundrels.

"Well, we can make it extremely lively for a dozen," said said Bob, grimly. "We have four pistols apiece, and that is twelve shots."

"Yes, and after that we have our knives," said Sam.

At this instant the trampling ceased.

"Hello, in there," called out a voice, which Dick recognized as belonging to Ronald Royston.

"Hello, yourself," replied Dick.

"Will you surrender?"

"Will we surrender, you ask?"

"Yes."

"Most assuredly we will not."

"Not by a jugfull," cried Bob.

"But there are only three of you."

"We know that," said Dick.

"While there are a dozen of us."

"We would not care if there were two dozen of you."

"The more there are of you the more certain we are of being able to kill every time we fire a shot," from Bob.

"Let me tell you something," said Royston.

"Go ahead," said Dick.

"I will. If you fellows kill or wound one of my men you will never leave this building alive."

"We will not leave the building alive, anyway, if you can prevent it."

"Well, I can prevent it."

"You think you can."

"There is no doubt regarding the matter."

"In my mind there is."

"Bah! what can three men do against a dozen?"

"We can kill the entire dozen."

"Bosh!"

"There is no 'bosh' about it."

"Bah! If we were a mind to rush in upon you, we could overwhelm you before you could fire more than one shot."

"If you think so, just rush in and find out," retorted Dick.

"I guess you don't know who we are, do you?" called out Bob. "Each of us three fellows has two pistols out and leveled, ready for use. We are dead shots with either right or left hand, and we will agree to drop six of you, at least, and then give the other six a lively fight."

"See here; you fellows had better be reasonable," said the leader of the gang.

"We are the most reasonable fellows in the world," said Dick quietly.

"That's right," said Bob.

"You had better surrender."

"Oh, no; it is you who are unreasonable when you ask that, Ronald Royston."

"You are a fool for saying that."

"Thanks."

"I ask you to surrender in order to save your lives."

"And your own."

"Bah! we are not afraid of losing our lives."

"Then come ahead and take us prisoners."

"That is just what we will do if you don't surrender."

"And if we were to surrender, you would murder us in cold blood, as you were on the point of doing in my case a little while ago."

"No; I give you my word that we will do nothing of the kind."

"Bah! what is your word worth?" cried Dick in scorn.

"My word is good. When I say I will do a thing I will do it."

"I would not believe you under any circumstances, Ronald Royston."

"Then you won't surrender?"

"To such a fiend? Never! We are in a position not to offer a good fight for our lives, and we intend to do that very thing. You may be able to get the better of us in the end, but if we die we will send the majority of your men to the other world ahead of us."

The youths heard the man give utterance to a muttered curse, and then the murmur of voices was heard. The scoundrels were talking the matter over.

Presently the murmuring sound ceased, and Dick called out:

"Well, have you decided to go away and let us leave this place unmolested?"

"No," was the reply. "We have not made up our minds to do anything of the kind."

"What are you going to do?"

"We are going to make you wish you had surrendered peaceably."

"All right; go ahead and do it."

Then Dick said to his two comrades:

"Be ready, boys, and if the scoundrels make a rush, kill as many as you can."

"We will, Dick," said Bob.

"Don't waste a bullet!"

"We won't."

Royston and his men, standing out in the hall, looked at one another dubiously.

They did not like the way the youths talked.

They were well aware that the three were members of the company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76," and they were also well aware of the fact that the "Liberty Boys" were not afraid of anything.

They realized only too well that if the youths said they would shoot to kill they would do it, and they had often heard it stated that the "Liberty Boys" were dead shots.

There was good reason, then, for their looking at one another dubiously and questioningly.

They had no desire to die. They wished to live. They were eager to get at the youths, eager to take the lives of the "Liberty Boys," but they felt that in accomplishing this they would lose a number of their own men—and no one of them felt like yielding up his life.

So they stood there, hesitating.

"Make a sudden rush, men, and overwhelm the three saucy rebels," said Royston.

"You lead the rush, cap'n," said one of the men. "We will follow."

"But I am your captain," he said. "My life is of more value to the cause than are yours. So go ahead, men."

"Your life may be worth more to the cause," retorted one of the men; "but your life isn't worth more to you than mine is to me, and I'm not going to rush in there to almost certain death unless our captain is willing to take the lead, which is the place for him to be if he is going to be leader."

"That's the way to talk," cried Bob. "Say, you, whoever you are, have some sense. I think you are out of your place being with such a gang. Draw out and be a man."

Just then a man came running up the front stairs and cried excitedly:

"Captain, there's a big gang of men coming, and I think they are the 'Liberty Boys'"

"Hurrah!" cried Bob Estabrook. "The boys are coming, Dick, and we are not only saved, but we'll kill or capture this gang of Tories or whatever they are."

The next instant the sound of trampling feet was heard, and the three realized that the gang of scoundrels was hastening back along the hall, toward the front of the building.

"They are getting out of this as fast as they know how," cried Bob. "Let's accelerate their movements by giving them a few shots, Dick."

"All right; but shoot low, boys," replied Dick.

The three leaped out in the hallway, and fired six shots into the crowd of fleeing loyalists. They aimed low, and while they wounded three or four of the scoundrels, none were killed. Indeed, none were seriously wounded, though to judge by the howls of pain to which they gave utterance one might have thought so.

Down the stairs they dashed, and out into the street, then around the corner of the building, and away toward the river front where they felt confident they could find secure hiding-places.

The three "Liberty Boys" emerged from the building soon afterward, but did not try to pursue the fleeing scoundrels.

"Let them go," said Dick. "I think we have given them a scare that will do them some good."

A few moments later the party of "Liberty Boys" to the number of twenty at least, arrived at the spot.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOYAL LEGION'S HEADQUARTERS.

"Hello! What's the trouble here, anyway?" asked Mark Morrison, who was the leader of the party of "Liberty Boys."

Dick explained all in a few words, and then gave the order to return to their quarters.

There was a great crowd of people in the street, and many of the spectators were rather rough-looking characters, but no move was made to interfere with the "Liberty Boys." The crowd seemed to be there merely out of curiosity.

The "Liberty Boys" returned to their quarters, and then Dick hunted up Colonel Campbell and told him that General Lincoln wished to see him at headquarters.

The colonel set out for headquarters at once, and General Lincoln told him what he wished done.

The colonel was delighted, and said he would start for Beaufort the first thing in the morning.

After a talk of half an hour, he saluted and withdrew, and at once began making preparations for the work he was to attempt.

Next morning the patriot force, consisting of six hundred infantry, and the one hundred "Liberty Boys" on horseback, set out.

It was about fifty miles to Beaufort, and Colonel Campbell figured on reaching the vicinity of the town in two days, and perhaps appear before it on the forenoon of the third day if he thought it advisable.

The "Liberty Boys," being mounted, kept well in advance of the main force, and by dividing up into two or three parties, was enabled to do thorough scouting work, and make it impossible for the British to take the patriots by surprise.

No redcoats were encountered, however, and on the evening of the second day from Charleston the patriot force went into camp within five miles of Beaufort.

Colonel Campbell called Dick into his tent, and they had a talk regarding what it was best to do.

"I don't wish to go at this thing blindly," said the colonel, "and so I think I will ask you to do some scouting and spying work for me, Dick. Will you do it?"

"Certainly, colonel," replied Dick. "I shall be glad to do it. So far as that is concerned you have only to order, and I would have to obey, as you are in command."

"I know, but I know that you have had practically as much experience as I have had, Dick, and I feel that it is best to do what we both decide is best."

"Well, I think that will be the best and safest thing to do, colonel. We must not go it blind, as you say. It will be better to know just what we are about."

"Then you will go and spy on the British in Beaufort?"

"Yes; I will set out at once."

"Very well. But be careful, Dick. Don't let them capture you."

"I will be very careful, colonel."

The youth went back to where the "Liberty Boys" were, and told them that he was going on a scouting and spying expedition.

"Let me go along with you, Dick," said Bob.

But Dick shook his head.

"No, I think I will be able to do better alone, Bob," he said. "I am not going to fight, but to slip around, slyly, and spy on the enemy."

"I know. But supposing the enemy sees you, and goes for you? Then you will have to fight, won't you?"

"Well, if I am cornered I will fight, of course, but I think that the best thing to do will be to run."

Bob laughed. "I guess that would be the best thing to do," he agreed.

Dick mounted his horse and rode away. It was not yet dark, and he thought that he would be able to reach the vicinity of Beaufort by dark.

The youth had ridden about three miles, as nearly as he could judge, when as he was riding along through heavy timber a dozen men stepped out in the road in front of him.

Of course he came to a stop, for he did not know what might be the result if he attempted to ride onward.

"Well, you have arrived on time, I see," remarked one, who seemed to be the leader of the party.

"Yes," said Dick. He did not know what to think, but felt that it might be as well to let matters shape themselves for a little while at least.

"We hail you, most worthy chief," the man said, making a motion with his hand.

"Now what does that mean?" Dick asked himself. "Why does he address me as 'most worthy chief'? I seem to have stumbled upon a mystery of some kind." Then the thought came to him that the men were members of some kind of a secret organization, that they had moreover mistaken him for their chief, and the chances were that he was in for trouble.

"What can they be?" the youth asked himself; and then like a flash he remembered his experience with Ronald Royston and his gang in the house in Charleston. Royston had said that they were members of an organization known as the Loyal Legion, and the suspicion entered the youth's mind that this might be another Loyal Legion party.

"In that case," said Dick to himself, "they must think me Ronald Royston, for he said he was the chief of the Loyal Legion. Jove, I have a mind to follow this thing up, and see what comes of it. It might be that I could

gain information that would be of great benefit to the cause of Liberty."

Dick was a daring youth, and he quickly decided to do this. He would let these men think he was what they supposed him to be, and try to secure some information.

So he made a motion with his hand as nearly like that made by the man as he could imitate it, and said:

"You were expecting me, then?"

"Yes, most worthy chief; and we were sent to await your coming and conduct you to the great headquarters camp."

"How far is it from here?" Dick asked.

The man looked slightly surprised, as if he could not see why such a question should be asked, but replied:

"One mile, most worthy chief."

"Through the timber?"

"Yes."

"Will I be able to ride, or must I get off and walk?"

"There is a path, most worthy chief, and you will have to walk."

"Very good. Lead on, and I will follow."

The spokesman took the lead, entering the timber near by, and the others followed in single file, and then Dick rode after them.

"I may be doing a foolish thing," mused Dick, as he rode along, "but I could not bring myself to the point of losing such a splendid chance to learn more about the Loyal Legion. I am beginning to think that it is a large organization, and that there is a chance that it may prove dangerous to the patriots of South Carolina. I would like to learn how many members it has, how they are distributed, what their aims are, and all about it. I know, from what Royston told me, that the members are loyalists, and have sympathy with the king, but it may be that they intend making some secret move against the patriots of this part of the South, and if so, and I can learn what they intend doing, and when they intend doing it, then I may be able to checkmate them, and spoil their plans."

Thus Dick reasoned, and he finally decided that, while he was taking great risks in venturing alone into the stronghold of the Loyal Legion, still it was likely that it would turn out that the risk had been worth taking.

"So long as I can fool them into thinking I am the 'most worthy chief,' I will be all right," thought Dick. "That proves that the organization is widespread—that they do not know their head chief by sight, I mean, it may be that they are just getting ready to go to work to carry out the purposes for which they have organized. In that case I will learn much that may be of value to the patriot cause."

Dick was so intensely patriotic that he never thought of going into consideration danger to himself, where there was anything that could be gained by risking himself, and he had no thought of drawing back, now that he had become convinced that benefit might result from following this affair up.

The men walked at a fair pace, and fifteen minutes later they emerged from among the trees, into a natural amphitheatre of several acres extent. It was a basin, in fact, surrounded by hills of considerable height—or almost surrounded, rather, the side from which they had entered being on one side on which there was no hill.

At the farther side of the basin, with the backs built tight close up against the side of the hill were three good-looking cabins. The cabins were built of logs, of course, and Dick's keen eyes made note of the fact that they were almost

"They have been recently built," he told himself, "and I more than half believe that they are intended as more or less permanent abiding places for the members of the Loyal Legion."

In front of the cabins, seated on rude benches, were at least fifty men, and they were in the main rough-looking fellows. As the party approached, with Dick following close behind, these men arose, and made a peculiar gesture with the right hand.

The members of the party escorting Dick made the same gesture in return, and the youth was shrewd enough to do the same. "I'll have to keep my eyes wide open," he told himself. "So far the signs of the organization seem to have been simple enough, but it may be that they have some that are not so plain to be seen, in which case I am likely to get into trouble through failing to recognize said signs and make return."

When they had reached the place where the fifty men stood, the members of Dick's party stopped, and he brought his horse to a stop, and leaped to the ground.

"I will attend to your horse, most worthy chief," said one of the men.

"Just lead him out to one side a little ways, and let him stand," said Dick.

"But you want that he shall be unbridled and unsaddled, do you not, sir?" the man asked in surprise.

"No," Dick made ready reply. "I have some business with the commander of the British force at Beaufort, and will ride on after a short stop here."

"Ah, you have some information for the British commander?"

"Yes."

The man led the horse a short distance to one side, and then all the men surrounded Dick, and greeted him by the name of "Most worthy chief."

"How is everything up at Charleston?" asked one man, who, Dick judged, was an under officer of the organization.

"Everything is as well as can be the case when the rebels have control," Dick replied.

"And how is the work on the tunnel progressing?" the same man asked.

Of course Dick did not know what tunnel the fellow had reference to, but he replied, promptly enough:

"It is progressing slowly, but steadily."

"And how soon, do you think, will they reach a point underneath the rebel headquarters?"

The youth began to have a glimmering of light on the subject of the tunnel. Members of the Loyal Legion were engaged in digging a tunnel under the building occupied by General Lincoln as headquarters.

"Now what is their object in that?" Dick asked himself. He thought it likely that by continuing the conversation he would be able to learn this.

"I think they will reach a point under the rebel headquarters in about four days more," he said. Of course he knew nothing about it, but he realized that neither did his hearers, so they would not know but what he was speaking of what he knew to be the truth.

"Four days? Ha, ha, ha! and then in goes the powder, off goes the explosion and up into the air will go the rebel general and all the other officers who have rooms in the building. It is a glorious plan. There is a surprise in store for our enemies."

"Yes, indeed," acquiesced Dick.

To himself he said: "Jove, I'm mighty glad I decided to come here. If I had not done so there is little doubt but that the plot to blow the patriot headquarters building up and kill the general and his officers would have succeeded. Now thanks to this information which I have secured, it is possible that I shall be able to defeat their plans."

The youth decided that he would send one of his "Liberty Boys" back to Charleston, post-haste, to carry the news of the infamous plan to General Lincoln.

"The result will be that we will nip their plan in the bud," he told himself, "and likely they will be able to effect the capture of a number of the members of the Loyal Legion."

"Now, most worthy chief, we shall be glad to hear what you have to tell us," said the man. "We have long waited for this moment with eagerness and longing, and we shall

be glad to hear the plans which have been formed by the Inner Council, of which you are the High Chief."

Dick felt that now he was getting into a tight place. He was treading on dangerous ground, for he knew nothing about the purposes and aims of the Loyal Legion, save what he had learned from the words of Ronald Royston and what he had picked up in the past few minutes, since coming to this place.

He stood looking at the faces in front of him in rather a doubtful manner, and was hesitating and wondering what he should say when he—and all the men present as well—was startled by hearing a cool, calm, but sharp and sarcastic voice say:

"Very bold and daring of you, Dick Slater. Very daring indeed, and you are playing a bold game, but you forgot to take your humble servant into consideration, and the result is that you are very neatly trapped. Dick Slater, you will never leave this spot alive."

The youth looked around quickly, and saw, seated on the back of his horse, just outside the circle of men, the one man of all men whom he least wished to see at that time—the real chief of the Loyal Legion, Ronald Royston.

CHAPTER V.

IN GREAT DANGER.

Dick realized that he was in a tight place, but he was one who never gave up till he was forced to do so.

He was quick-witted, and it seemed an impossibility to take him sufficiently by surprise so as to make him show discomfort.

In the present case he acted in a most unexpected manner—unexpected to Ronald Royston, at least.

The men who were surrounding Dick stared at the newcomer in silent amazement and wonder, and seemed dazed by his sudden appearance and words.

Taking advantage of their amazement and wonder, Dick suddenly called out: "Seize him, men. Seize the scoundrel. He is a rebel, and indeed I think he is the arch rebel whose name he mentioned—Dick Slater! Seize him. Don't let him get away."

This aroused the members of the Loyal Legion, and a number of them leaped forward, and laid hands upon the newcomer. They did not pull him off his horse, however, for he suddenly uttered some peculiar words and made a

gesture with both hands, and the men fell back as if struck in the face by strong blows.

The "Liberty Boy" realized that his plan for having Royston made a prisoner by his own men had failed, and he realized that if he wished to save his own life he would have to act quickly. Indeed, he doubted his ability to make his escape, but he was ready to make the attempt.

He suddenly whirled and made a leap to get through the line of men surrounding him, but Royston was watching him, in expectation that he would make some such move, and called out quickly:

"Seize him, men. He is Dick Slater, the rebel. Don't let him get away."

Half a dozen strong hands seized Dick, and although he made a strong fight for his freedom, it was impossible that he should get away, and soon he was standing there, a prisoner, his hands bound together behind his back.

Then Royston leaped to the ground and confronted Dick.

There was a look of fiendish joy, of triumph, on his face.

"Well, we meet again, Dick Slater," he almost hissed.

"So it seems," was Dick's cool reply.

"The other time you made your escape."

"Yes, so I did."

"This time it will be different."

There was as much meaning in the fellow's tone and looks as in the words, and it was plain that he did not intend that the youth should escape this time.

"Oh, you think I will not make my escape this time?" remarked Dick quietly.

"I know you will not."

"Oh, you know it?"

"Yes; and now, what was your purpose in coming here and passing yourself off for me?"

"Oh, I had no particular purpose," was the careless reply. "I simply did it for the excitement of the thing."

"Bah! you cannot deceive me."

"No?"

"No."

"I am not trying to do so."

"I know better; your reason for coming here and representing yourself to be me was that you might learn the secrets of the Loyal Legion."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. And now, I wish to know what you have learned?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing, you say?"

"Nothing."

Royston looked around at the men, and said:

"Is that true? Had you talked of no secrets of the order before I put in an appearance?"

"We had been talking of the tunnel under the rebel headquarters in Charleston," said the man who had done most of the talking to Dick before Royston put in an appearance.

"Ah, you had been talking about that, eh?"

"Yes."

Royston turned a triumphant face toward Dick.

"So you had learned something, eh?" he remarked.

"Well, it will do you no good."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. You will never carry the information you have secured away from this spot."

"You think not?"

"I know it."

"Why will I not?"

"Why?"

"Yes."

"Because you will never leave this spot alive."

The tone was vicious, the look on the man's face triumphant.

"Oh, come, now, Ronald Royston," said Dick, calmly.

"You will not dare put me to death."

"You think not?" with a sneering smile.

"That is what I think."

"What makes you think so?"

"It is very simple. If you were to put me out of the way my 'Liberty Boys' would come down on you and put every one of you to death."

"Oh, they would, eh?"

"They would."

"They would have to find our hiding-place first, would they not?"

"Oh, they would have no difficulty in doing that."

"They would not?"

"Not a bit, as you will find if you attempt to put your threat into effect."

Royston looked searchingly at Dick. It was evident that he hardly knew what to think of the youth's statement. His experience with him in Charleston had taught him that Dick Slater was no common youth, and that when he said a thing it would be well to give his words due consideration.

"Where are your 'Liberty Boys'?" he asked.

"That is for you to find out."

"I don't believe they are anywhere near here."

"You do not?"

"No; I believe that they are in Charleston, and that you are down here alone, on a spying expedition."

"That is where you are mistaken."

"Your 'Liberty Boys' came with you?"

"Yes."

"Good! Then we will put you to death and hunt them up, and kill half their number."

To Royston's surprise Dick laughed aloud.

"You need not think you can do anything of that kind," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because you cannot hope to succeed."

"We can't hope to succeed, you say?"

"That is just what I say."

"What is to hinder us from succeeding?"

"The 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Oh, they will hinder us, eh?"

"They will."

"If they can."

"Oh, there is no doubt regarding their ability to do so."

"That is what you say."

"It is the truth, too."

"We will see about that later."

"You will find that I have told you the truth."

"Perhaps so; perhaps not."

"There is no 'perhaps' about it. Not only will you not find the 'Liberty Boys' and take them by surprise, but on the other hand they will surprise you."

"We'll risk that," said Royston.

"Very well."

"Now the first thing to do is to decide what shall be done with you."

Royston looked around him, upon the faces of the men. They had been listening to the conversation between their chief and the "Liberty Boy" with interest, and now they eyed their chief eagerly and expectantly.

"Men," said Royston, in a loud, impressive voice; "this young fellow whom we have a prisoner here among us is Dick Slater, the noted rebel scout, spy, and captain of the 'Liberty Boys.' He has been caught among us, trying to learn the secrets of our organization, with the purpose of going and making use of said information to our disadvantage; now what shall be his punishment?"

"Death!" came in chorus from the lips of the men.

Royston looked triumphantly at Dick.

"You hear?" he said.

"I am not deaf," was the calm reply.

"The men say that you must be put to death."

"I heard them so express themselves." Dick's tone and bearing were perfectly cool and calm.

"Very well, men," said Royston. "And now, in what manner shall the prisoner be put to death?"

"Shoot him!" came in a chorus.

"Hang him!" in another chorus.

"As there seems to be a difference of opinion regarding how it should be done," said Dick calmly, "I would suggest that you do neither, but release me and permit me to go my way."

"You are a cool one," said Royston, "but your bravery and coolness will avail you nothing."

"I am sure of it. This time you are not going to escape the fate which is in store for you."

"Let me tell you something, Ronald Royston," said Dick.

"Well?" impatiently.

"If you knew the fate that awaits you and your men, if you put me to death, you would do anything else rather than do it."

"Bah! we are not boys, to be intimidated by threats."

"You would be better off if you were."

"Bah! that will do. You need not bother to make any more such statements. They have no more effect than water has on a duck's back."

"I wish to give you fair warning."

"Thank you," ironically. "You have done your full duty, Dick Slater, so you need not worry."

Then he turned his attention to his men. "You seem to be divided on the matter of the manner in which the prisoner shall be put to death," he said, "so I will put it to a vote. All in favor of shooting the prisoner, raise their hands."

Quite a number did so.

Royston counted the hands, and then said:

"Very good. Now all that are in favor of hanging the prisoner will raise their hands."

The others raised their hands, and when Royston had counted the hands he said:

"There are more in favor of the hanging than there are in favor of the shooting, so we will hang the prisoner."

"Good! Good!" went up from the men, who seemed delighted by the prospect of taking the life of a fellow man.

"Well, there is no need of delaying longer," said Royston; "here is the prisoner, there is a tree, and all we need is a rope and some willing hands to pull on it."

"Here's a rope," cried a voice, and one of the men, who had just come forth from one of the cabins, held up a rope.

"Good! Rig a noose and put it around the prisoner's neck!"

This was quickly done.

"Now throw the other end of the rope over that limb," pointing to the limb of a large tree which stood near.

The men seized Dick, hustled him over to a place underneath the limb in question, and the end of the rope was thrown over it. A dozen strong hands seized hold of the rope and drew it taut.

The entire crowd crowded around, so as to be where they could get a good view of the affair.

Royston, as master of ceremonies, stood right in front of Dick.

"Well," he said, gazing triumphantly in the eyes of the "Liberty Boy," "what do you think about this matter now?"

"I have already told you what I think," was the firm, undaunted reply. "If you go ahead with this affair, and put me to death you will very soon be made to feel sorry that you did so."

"Ha, ha, ha! I am not at all alarmed, Dick Slater."

"Perhaps not; but that does not do away with the fact that if you murder me it will mean the utter extermination of your entire gang."

"Murder you?"

"Yes."

"We do not call it by that name."

"That is what it will be, however."

"Not at all. You are a rebel, a traitor to your king, and we shall be doing only our duty to our king in putting you to death."

"Bah! It will be murder, nothing less. I am not a traitor to the king, for the reason that I deny that he has ever had any authority over me. I claim that I am a free and independent man, and that I am only doing my duty, and exercising my right in fighting against him. He is a tyrant, and has no right to try to rule over we people of America."

"Such talk as that is mere folly," said Royston. "The king has a right to rule over you, and all Americans, and he is going to keep on doing so, too, just as long as he lives, and when he dies, the next king of England will do the same."

"You are mistaken," said Dick, calmly and decidedly. "The king of England will never again rule the people of America. They will never agree to it, will never yield. Remember the words of Patrick Henry: 'Give me liberty or give me death!' Those words find an echo in the heart of every true patriot in America, and the soldiers are willing to keep right on fighting till they die, rather than give up and allow the yoke to be replaced on their necks!"

"Very pretty talk," sneered Royston; "but there is nothing of truth in it. Before another year shall have passed the war will be ended and King George's word will be law in America."

"King George's word—or that of any other king—will never again be the law for the people of America, Ronald Royston," said Dick in a ringing voice. "The people of America are going to be free and independent."

"Well, you will not live to see it, at any rate," cried the scoundrel fiercely. "Up with the rebel, men. We'll put an end to him as a starter, at any rate."

The men who had hold of the rope pulled down in obedience to the command, and slowly but surely the brave "Liberty Boy" was drawn up into the air.

CHAPTER VI.

A FORTUNATE MOVE.

Bob Estabrook had a sober fit for a few minutes after Dick Slater left the encampment to go on the spying expedition to Beaufort.

"It seems to me just as if Dick was going into some terrible danger," he said to Mark Morrison, presently, and that youth, who well knew that Bob was as a general thing noted for looking on the bright side of everything, was surprised and not a little impressed.

"That is strange," he said. "You don't often have such spells, Bob."

"You are right, Mark. I have seen Dick start on spying expeditions scores of times, I judge, but I never before had such a feeling as has come over me since he disappeared. It seems to me just as if he was in some great danger."

"Why not follow him?" said Mark, hesitatingly. "Do you suppose he would be very angry?"

"Oh, no; he wouldn't be angry, at all; but I hate to disobey orders. He told us to stay here in the encampment till he came back."

"I know he did; and under ordinary circumstances we would not think of doing other than he told us to do; but it seems to me as if this is not an ordinary occasion."

"Well, if my feelings are to be relied on, it isn't," was the sober reply. "Jove, I feel as blue as a bag of indigo."

"Let's follow Dick, Bob," said Mark.

"I have a good mind to."

"I think we will be justified in doing so."

"I think so myself."

"Then let's go."

Bob was silent for a few minutes, and then said, firmly:

"All right; we'll go after Dick, Mark."

"Just you and I?"

"No; I shall take about twenty of the boys. Something tells me that we may need them."

"All right."

Bob quickly selected twenty of the youths, and told them to get ready for the road, and they hastened to obey the order. They had expected that they would remain quietly in camp, but were glad that they were not to do so. The "Liberty Boys" were always ready to go on the road. Action suited them. To sit around in camp was what they detested above all things, and all would have been glad to go with Bob. He felt that he would hardly be justified in taking all the "Liberty Boys" out on the road, however, and contented himself with taking twenty.

The youths were soon mounted, and then they rode away, toward the south, following in the wake of Dick Slater, who had no suspicion that such a move was being made.

They did not ride very rapidly, as they knew where Dick was going, and did not need to keep him in sight.

When they had ridden about two miles and a half, they came to a stop on the top of a high hill, and dismounting, led their horses into the timber at the side of the road. Then Bob climbed into the top of a tree and looked ahead up the road.

The road stretched away, straight as a string, as far as Bob could see, but nowhere was Dick to be seen.

The youth did not know what to think.

"Jove, he ought to be in sight," he said to himself. "He had only a few minutes start of us, and ought not to be more than a mile ahead. Where can he have gone?"

Bob's fears were aroused at once. The old feeling of fear that some terrible danger threatened his comrade returned to him with redoubled force.

"He must have turned aside," thought Bob; "but why did he do so? He was headed for Beaufort, I know, with the intention of spying on the British, and he would not turn aside unless for some very important reason. Now, what would cause him to do so?"

After thinking the matter over, Bob came to the conclusion that the probabilities were that Dick had not turned aside of his own free will.

"He has gotten into trouble. I am sure of it," he told himself. "Possibly he has been captured."

This thought was very disquieting, and Bob climbed down out of the tree in haste.

"I can't see anything of Dick in the road ahead of us," he told Mark Morrison.

The "Liberty Boys" stared at Bob in amazement.

"How far ahead can you see?" asked Mark.

"Oh, two miles, at least."

"He couldn't be that far ahead of us," said one.

"No," said Mark. "He must have turned aside somewhere."

"But where?" said Sam Sanderson.

"Yes, and why?" said Bob, significantly.

The youths looked at one another with consternation written on their faces. They understood what Bob meant.

"You mean——" Mark paused and hesitated.

"I mean that I do not believe Dick turned aside of his own free will," said Bob decidedly.

"You think he has been——"

"Captured!" finished Bob.

"By redcoats?" asked Sam.

"Perhaps; or possibly by a band of Tories."

"What shall we do?" asked Mark.

Before Bob could reply, one of the youths said "Sh! I hear the sound of hoof-beats!"

All listened, and heard the sound quite plainly.

A horseman was approaching, without doubt, but they realized that it could hardly be Dick, for he was approaching from the northward.

The youths took up their station behind trees, and waited for the newcomer to put in an appearance.

Presently a horseman appeared in sight, and soon was opposite them, and to Bob's surprise, the man was no other than Ronald Royston.

"That's the scoundrel that had Dick cooped up in the old house in Charleston," the youth said to himself. "Now, what can he be doing down here?"

Bob's first impulse was to have his men leap out and seize the scoundrel, and make a prisoner of him, but on second thought he decided to let Royston go on, and then follow him. There was scarcely any formulated suspicion in Bob's mind, but somehow it seemed to him that this was the thing to do, and he obeyed the impulse blindly.

Royston passed the hiding-place of the "Liberty Boys," and rode onward all unconscious of the fact that he had been within a few yards of a party made up of enemies.

"Why didn't you capture him, Bob?" asked Mark.

"I hardly know, myself, Mark," was the reply. "Something seemed to tell me to let him go, and then follow him, and that is what we will do."

"You think that he may lead us to——"

"I hardly know what to think, Mark. We will follow

Royston, at any rate, and see what comes of it. We don't know what has become of Dick, and might as well do that as anything else."

"True enough; and perhaps in so doing we may be enabled to again get track of Dick."

"I hope so."

The youths watched Royston till he was out of sight down the road, hidden by intervening rocks, boulders, and bushes, and then they mounted their horses and rode slowly after him.

They were afraid he might discover that he was being followed, and moved very cautiously.

Presently they came to a point where they could not advance farther without being out in plain view, if Royston should look back, and they halted, scarcely knowing what to do. While they were talking the matter over one of the youths, who had kept his eyes on the horseman, exclaimed:

"He has turned aside, and entered the timber."

"Good enough," exclaimed Bob. "Come on, boys. We will be able to follow him without being in danger of being discovered."

They rode onward, up the road, and when they neared the spot where they had seen Royston enter the timber they looked closely, and discovered a path which gave evidence of having been used quite a good deal.

"Single file, now, boys," said Bob; "and be on your guard and ready for anything."

Bob took the lead, and the others followed, one after another, in single file.

Bob kept a sharp lookout ahead, but did not catch sight of Royston. This was scarcely to be expected, anyway, however, for the path wound in and out in such a manner as to make anyone invisible if a hundred yards in advance.

Fifteen minutes of this, and then Bob brought his horse to a standstill suddenly, while he murmured an exclamation under his breath.

He had come within an ace of riding right out into the open basin, at the farther side of which was the party of Tories who called themselves members of the Loyal Legion.

Bob motioned for his comrades to stop, which they did, and then he dismounted, the others doing likewise.

They tied their horses and stole forward and took up their position near where Bob stood.

"Look!" whispered Bob to Mark, pointing. "See, there is Dick in the midst of that crowd, and he is a prisoner."

"You are right," said Mark. "Jove, it was lucky we followed him, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed. Those are heartless rascals, capable of

doing anything, and if they should take it into their heads to kill Dick they would not hesitate to do it."

"I guess you are right; and that fellow, Royston, seems to be the chief scoundrel of the gang, doesn't he?"

"Yes; and now, we must make our plans for getting Dick out of their hands, Mark. You notice that they outnumber us nearly, if not quite, three to one, and we must make a surprise count for enough to counterbalance this."

"I think we can do it, Bob."

"I guess so; tell the boys to get ready. We will have to do something pretty quickly, for, see—they are going to hang Dick."

The "Liberty Boys" were busy getting ready for the attack which they were determined to make on the Tories, and while making their preparations they kept their eyes on the crowd in front of the cabins at the farther side of the open space.

They saw the Tories lead Dick to a place under the tree, saw them place a rope around his neck, throw the other end over a limb, and pull down on it till the rope was taut.

Bob looked at his comrades, saw that they were all ready, and then he said to Mark:

"We will wait till Royston gives the order for the men to pull Dick up, and then we will rush forth. You see, they will all have their eyes fixed on Dick, and will not be looking for our appearance, and we will be able to get close up to them before they know we are coming. Then two quick, sharp pistol-volleys ought to scatter them."

"I think so, Bob."

Bob made the signal for the youths to be ready to leap forward at an instant's notice, and then waited, watched, and listened.

Presently he heard Royston say, "Up with the rebel, men," and at the same instant Bob gave the signal for the youths to advance.

As one man the youths bounded forward; they emerged from among the trees, and ran across the open ground with all their speed. The men who had hold of the rope were pulling down on it, and had just lifted Dick's feet from the ground, and the eyes of every Tory were upon the scene, when Bob gave the signal to fire.

Instantly the youths fired a volley, which was effective, for at least a dozen of the Tories went down, and then again they fired, almost as many more of the enemy going down, and then on the air rose the wild cheer of the "Liberty Boys."

"Kill them. Kill the scoundrels," yelled Bob, and the youths charged directly upon the almost paralyzed Tories.

At the first volley the men who had hold of the rope had

let go, and Dick had been let drop back to the earth. He lost his footing and fell, and although not injured, he lay still, so as to give the "Liberty Boys" a better chance to fire on the enemy without being in any danger of hitting him.

Although amazed that the "Liberty Boys" should be on hand, Dick knew that was who the newcomers were, without even taking the trouble to look. There was no mistaking their cheering voices.

Of a sudden the Tories recovered the use of their faculties, and made a dash for the cabins, into which they darted with the speed and celerity of rats going into their holes.

The "Liberty Boys" had drawn more pistols, and fired two more volleys in quick succession, and although they did not do so much damage, they did enough to make it worth while.

Bob, however, had leaped to Dick's side and cut the rope binding his arms. "Come," he cried. "We must get away before those scoundrels have time to fire upon us from the shelter of the cabins."

Bob and Dick bounded away toward the edge of the timber, the other "Liberty Boys" following, and as he went Dick gave utterance to a shrill, tremulous whistle, and his horse came galloping after him.

Just as they reached the edge of the timber the Tories fired a volley, and some of the bullets inflicted wounds, but fortunately none of the wounds were dangerous, and the youths succeeded in mounting and getting out of sight amid the trees before a second volley could be fired.

CHAPTER VII.

IN BEAUFORT.

The youths rode onward as fast as they could go, and ten minutes later reached the road.

Here they halted, and Dick explained the danger that was threatening General Lincoln and his officers, through the likelihood that the headquarters building might at any moment be blown up by the Tories.

"You boys hasten back to the encampment," said Dick, "and Sam, you mount a fresh horse and start at once for Charleston. Don't spare your horse. It is a matter of life or death. Get there and warn General Lincoln at the earliest possible moment."

"All right, Dick."

"What are we going to do about this gang, back here at the cabins, Dick?" asked Bob.

"We are going to go after them, Bob."

"When?"

"Just as soon as you can get back from the encampment with our entire force of 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Ah, I understand."

"All right; go, now, before the Tories come and find us here, and give us an unpleasant surprise."

"Where are you going?"

"On to Beaufort, on my spying expedition."

"And you will meet us here?"

"Yes."

"How soon?"

"Oh, two and a half to three hours from now."

"All right; we'll be here."

"I shall look for you; good-bye till then."

"Good-bye."

The "Liberty Boys" mounted their horses and rode away in the direction of the encampment, and Dick rode away toward Beaufort.

It was not a long ride to Beaufort, and Dick was soon at his destination.

Of course he did not ride clear to the town. He dismounted half a mile distant from the edge of the town, and secreted his horse, after which he made his way forward on foot.

He moved slowly and cautiously, for he knew that he might happen upon a sentinel at any moment.

The youth found that the British were not keeping as close a lookout as they might have done, and he succeeded in getting past the sentinels without much trouble, and found himself within the confines of the town.

He moved along with more assurance now, for he felt that the redcoats would not have any suspicion that he was not a citizen of the place, and would not pay any attention to him.

He made his way about the town, taking in everything with his keen eyes, and managing to make a very close estimate as to the number of men in the British force.

In the little open square in the center of the town was quite a gathering of redcoats, and Dick wondered what it could mean. He made his way thither, and to his surprise saw Royston, the head man of the Loyal Legion, sitting on the back of his horse, talking to the redcoats.

"Yes, we were attacked by Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys,'" Dick heard the fellow say as he drew near, "and the probabilities are that Dick Slater himself either is in your town at this moment, spying on you, or will be soon."

Murmurs went up from the hearers at this, and they looked around them as if with the expectation of seeing the "Liberty Boy."

The sun had set and it was now growing dark, which made it impossible for the horseman, Royston, to recognize Dick at the edge of the crowd.

"It won't be good for the rebel if he ventures into the town."

"No; not if we catch him."

"We'll shoot him on sight!"

"Or hang him up to a tree!"

Such were a few of the exclamations from the lips of the redcoats.

"Well, let me tell you, Dick Slater is a mighty slippery chap," said Royston. "I have had him in my power twice, and each time would not have given a half-pence for his chances for life, and both times he escaped."

"Just let us get hold of him, and he won't escape," growled a big fellow who stood within arm's-length of Dick, and he glared around him. His glance happened to rest upon Dick, and there was something in the keen, bronzed face of the youth that aroused the fellow's suspicion.

"Are you Dick Slater?" he cried, leaping forward and seizing hold of the youth.

For answer Dick dealt the man a terrible blow in the stomach and another on the jaw, and the redcoat sank insensible to the ground.

The youth had realized that he was in great danger, and had put all his strength in the blows, with the result that the fellow was rendered unconscious.

Instantly there was great excitement.

It was not so dark but that those near at hand could see what was going on, and a dozen redcoats leaped forward intent on seizing the youth.

"Seize him."

"Don't let him get away."

"Grab him."

"He has knocked Jim senseless."

"Who is he, anyway?"

"He is Dick Slater," yelled Royston, who saw that some kind of an encounter had taken place, and at once suspected that the "Liberty Boy" was on hand. "I'll wager it is Dick Slater! Grab him, and let me look at him, and I will tell you whether or not it is he."

In an instant a struggle was in progress.

The moment he had caused the redcoat to release his hold by knocking him senseless, Dick leaped backward, and finding himself almost surrounded in a twinkling he began fighting like a demon. He struck out rapidly, whirling

around and around, and let out all his force in the blows with the result that he knocked six or seven of the redcoats down. Then, seeing an opening, he darted through, and raced away at the top of his speed.

The redcoats saw this, and were wild with rage.

"After him."

"Don't let him escape."

"Catch him."

"Head him off."

"Shoot him."

"Stop, or we'll fire."

Such were a few of the cries and exclamations, but of course Dick did not stop. He felt that it would be much better to risk being fired upon than to encounter certain death by stopping and permitting himself to be captured.

The "Liberty Boy" bounded down the street, and turned the first corner he came to. Then he continued onward at his best speed, and after him, like a pack of hounds after a fox, came the redcoats.

Then of a sudden there sounded the thunder of hoof-beats, and Royston passed the redcoats on foot, and rapidly overhauled the fugitive.

The youth heard the hoof-beats, and knew instinctively what it meant.

"Royston is coming on horseback," he said to himself.

The youth set his teeth firmly together, and drawing one of his pistols, cocked it.

He waited till the horseman was within a few yards of him, and then stopped quickly, whirled, and fired a snap-shot at his enemy.

With a yell of pain, Royston threw up his arms and fell out of the saddle. He struck the ground, and rolled over and over, and without giving him a second glance, Dick leaped forward, and seizing the bridle-reins of the flying horse, checked the animal sufficiently for his purpose, and then leaped into the saddle, and dashed away.

Royston was not seriously injured. The bullet had grazed his skull, and had been sufficient to knock him out of the saddle, but had not done serious harm, and the fellow was on his feet very quickly, and cursed and yelled like a madman.

"Don't let him escape," he cried. "He is the famous rebel spy, Dick Slater. After him, men."

"What good will it do us to chase him, when he is mounted and us afoot?" asked the redcoat in a growling voice; he'll get away unless one of the sentinels should happen to bring him down."

"Gone, and with my horse," snarled Royston. "Curses on the fellow. He is the luckiest scoundrel alive."

"It seems to me that his success is due more to good work on his part than to good luck," said one fellow, who was fair-minded and willing to give credit where it was due.

"He certainly is a terror," another remarked.

"Haven't you a company of horse?" asked Royston, excitedly.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then why not mount and pursue the scoundrelly rebel?"

"We can do so, of course; but I don't think it will do us any good."

"Try it, at any rate."

It was decided to do so, and all haste was made to mount and set out in pursuit.

At the edge of the town they paused an instant to ask the sentinel if he had seen the fugitive, and he replied that he had.

"Yes, I saw him," was the reply; "he went past me like a streak of lightning, and although I took a shot at him, I did no damage to either him or the horse."

"After him, men," cried Royston, who had mounted and accompanied the force, despite his sore head. "Perhaps we may be able to overtake him."

"You may overtake him," murmured the sentinel, as the redcoats dashed onward; "but I have my doubts regarding the matter," and he laughed.

Dick had dashed past the sentinel, as the fellow said, and the bullet from the musket had whistled past within six inches of his head, but the whistling of bullets had no terrors for the youth, and he continued onward, till he came to the point where he had secreted his horse.

Here he stopped, dismounted, and leading the horse in to where his own animal was tied he came to a stop.

"I believe I'll wait here a few minutes and see what happens," he thought. "They may mount and pursue me, and in that case I would prefer being behind them, as I will have two horses to get along, and will not have to go at such a pace."

He waited patiently, for perhaps ten minutes, and then he heard the sound of hoof-beats.

"Ha! I thought so," he exclaimed. "They have mounted, and have set out in pursuit of me. I wonder how many there are of them?"

He peered out from his hiding-place, and presently he saw a dark mass go dashing past. The night was now so dark that he could not distinguish the horsemen separately, but he judged from the size of the dark moving mass that there were forty or fifty in the party.

"Now I will follow at my leisure," the youth said to himself, and he led both horses out, and mounting one and leading the other, rode up the road in the wake of the redcoats.

The youth rode onward at an ordinary gallop for perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes, and then he found himself at the point where the pathway led to the headquarters of the Loyal Legion.

He paused and pondered a few minutes.

"I wonder if the redcoats went on up the road in the hope of being able to overtake and capture me, or whether they gave up the idea by the time they got here, and made their way to the cabins in the basin?"

This was the question Dick asked himself, but he had no means of answering it, of course, and so he decided to ride onward, in the hope that he might meet the "Liberty Boys."

"It is a bit too soon to look for them, however, I think," he told himself. "Still, if they rode rapidly, they might be within a mile or so of here."

He was on the point of continuing his journey, when he heard the sound of hoof-beats coming from the northward. "That might be my 'Liberty Boys,'" he thought. "And then again it may be the redcoats returning from their unsuccessful pursuit of myself. I will exercise all due precaution, and conceal myself till I find out which it is."

He rode into the edge of the timber and waited.

Nearer and nearer the sound of the hoof-beats came, and presently a dark, moving body came in sight. As it drew nearer, Dick heard the voices of the men in conversation, and knew at once that it was the party of redcoats.

"They gave up all hope of being able to overtake me, and are returning," he said to himself, "and now, I wonder if they will turn aside and go to the headquarters of the Loyal Legion? If they do it will make our task of thrashing the Tories more difficult, for they will have as strong a force as we will have, and will have the protection of the cabins."

He watched eagerly, and sure enough, after pausing a few minutes, and talking in an earnest manner, the party turned aside, and disappeared within the depths of the forest.

"Very well; go there, if you want to," said Dick to himself. "I think we will be able to make it very lively for you."

Then he waited as patiently as possible for the coming of the "Liberty Boys."

CHAPTER VIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

When Dick Slater and the party of twenty "Liberty Boys" parted, Dick to go to Beaufort and the others to re-

turn to the patriot encampment, the "Liberty Boys" rode at a rapid pace, for they were eager to reach the encampment, tell the rest of their comrades to get ready, and return to the point where they would meet Dick.

Then, too, there was another reason for haste: Sam Sanderson wished to get started to Charleston at the earliest possible moment, for he realized that it was very important that he should reach the city quickly. There was no knowing at what moment the Tories might set off the gunpowder and blow the headquarters building up.

The party soon arrived at the encampment, and Sam hastened to bridle and saddle a fresh horse; then with a good-bye to his comrades, he mounted and dashed away toward the north.

He rode hard, stopping only when absolutely necessary, to let his horse rest, or to eat a bite and permit the animal to eat something, and he rode into Charleston next day at eleven o'clock.

He did not stop until he was in front of the headquarters building, and then he leaped to the ground and dashed into the building.

"Hello, what is the trouble, Sam?" asked General Lincoln, leaping up in some surprise as the youth burst into the room in which he and some of his officers were seated. He knew that Sam had departed with the force that had gone south to attack Beaufort, and he feared the youth was the bearer of bad news.

"Did you fail, and get into trouble down there?" asked another officer, eagerly and anxiously.

"No, no; the trouble is here," replied Sam. "Dick Slater made a discovery that danger threatened you officers, and sent me back to warn you."

"Danger threatens us?" exclaimed General Lincoln.

"Yes."

"But what danger could possibly threaten us? There must be some mistake."

"No, there is no mistake. The Tories who call themselves the Loyal Legion are tunneling under this building, and are going to place several barrels of gunpowder underneath it and blow the building up."

The officers leaped to their feet in amazement and consternation, and stared at the youth and then at one another.

"They are going to blow this building up?" gasped General Lincoln.

"Yes."

"When is it to be done?"

"Dick did not learn that. It may occur at any moment."

Exclamations of alarm escaped the officers' lips.

"We had better vacate the building at once, then," cried me.

"Yes," agreed the general. "But we must save the official papers. Here, help me, and we will be ready to get out in a few minutes."

He opened some secret drawers in his writing-desk and drew forth several armfuls of papers, which he handed to his officers.

Then he seized his sword, and said:

"Come. It may be a false alarm, but to be on the safe side, we will vacate the building."

The officers at once left the building, Sam accompanying them. Then the servants, sentinels, and orderlies were called out, and all who had been inmates of the building retired to another vacant house two blocks distant.

They had just reached the building when there came the sound of a terrible explosion. The earth shook and quaked as if from an earthquake, and then up in the air went the building that had just been vacated by the officers of the patriot force in Charleston.

They had escaped only just in time.

Had Sam been fifteen minutes later in reaching Charleston with the information of the plot it would have been too late.

The building was torn into thousands of fragments, and distributed over the surrounding territory for two blocks in all directions.

Several people were injured by the falling debris.

Fortunately, however, no one was killed.

The officers gazed at one another with blanched faces. They realized how near they had come to a horrible death. death.

General Lincoln seized Sam's hand and shook it heartily.

"My boy, you have saved our lives," he said, feelingly.

"We shall never forget it."

The others shook hands with the youth, and each had something in the way of thanks and appreciation to say to him.

"It is not I who deserves the thanks," said Sam modestly. "Dick Slater is the one who deserves it all. He

risked his life and secured the information. I simply did as he told me, and brought the information to you."

"Well, you deserve our thanks, just the same, Sam," said the general, "for you might have delayed in reaching here, and the slightest delay would have been fatal."

"That is true, certainly," the youth admitted. "I did not pause an instant more than was absolutely necessary, and this proves that I did not get here a minute too soon," with a motion toward the scene of the explosion.

"You are right, Sam."

The officers entered the vacant building, and took up their quarters there, and the first thing General Lincoln did was to send one of his officers and a lot of soldiers to make an effort to hunt down and capture the Tories who had set off the powder and blown the building up.

The patriot soldiers searched long and faithfully, but they could not find any traces of the Tories who had done the mischief, and were forced to give it up.

"Well, this proves it will be necessary to keep a sharp watch of the known Tories in the city, and of those who are suspected of being in sympathy with the king's cause," said General Lincoln, and the other officers acquiesced in this view of the case.

Sam Sanderson was so eager to get back and have a hand in the attack on the British force in Beaufort that he remained in Charleston only till one o'clock. He caught a nap of nearly an hour, ate a bite, filled his saddle-bags with food, and then, mounting a fresh horse, rode away toward the south.

"I'll get back in time to help the boys thrash the redcoats in Beaufort, or know the reason why," he said to himself, grimly.

* * * * *

The redcoats who had left Beaufort in pursuit of Dick Slater rode at top speed till they were a mile or more beyond the point where the path entered the timber and led to the headquarters of the Loyal Legion, and then they came to a stop.

"I don't think there is any use of going farther," said a captain, who was in command of the party.

"I judge you are right," acquiesced Royston, reluctantly. "It looks as if the scoundrelly rebel has escaped."

"Yes; he is back in the rebel encampment by this time, and if, as you say, there are six or seven hundred of the rebels there, it would be a very foolish piece of business for us to venture near their encampment."

"So it would. Well, there are at least that number."

"And you think their purpose in coming down here is to attack us in Beaufort?"

"I know that it is. As I told have told you, some of my men played the spy in Charleston, and learned that that was the object of the rebel force in coming down here."

"Well, forewarned is forearmed, and I think we will be able to stand them off."

Then they turned their horses and rode back. When they came to the point where the path led toward the headquarters of the Loyal Legion, they paused and discussed the matter of going there.

Royston wished them to do so.

"I more than half suspect that the 'Liberty Boys' will make an attack on my men before morning," he said, "and if you will go there and help us we may be able to give the rebels a good thrashing."

"Very well; we will do it," said the captain; "there is no danger that the rebel force will move on Beaufort to-night, so we may as well help you men out as not."

"True; and then we will in turn help you out when the rebels attack you at Beaufort in force."

"Very well; lead the way. We will follow."

Royston entered the timber, and rode along the path, the redcoats following in single file, and fifteen minutes later they arrived at the basin in which stood the three cabins.

A sentinel hailed them as they approached, and Royston gave the countersign, and the party rode into the basin. They dismounted, tethered their horses, and then the British captain and Royston held a council.

"Do you really expect an attack from the 'Liberty Boys' to-night?" asked the officer.

"I do," replied Royston.

"Then I will tell you what I think would be a splendid plan for us to follow out."

"What is the plan?"

"I suppose your idea was that we should all enter the cabins and from the protection afforded by the logs, offer resistance to the 'Liberty Boys' attack?"

"Yes, that was my idea."

"Well, my plan is better, I think. It is that we conceal ourselves at the edge of the timber, yonder, and also along the path along which the enemy will likely come, and when they put in an appearance we will give them a surprise, and if we are lucky we may almost wipe them out at the first fire."

"That is a good plan," agreed Royston. "Strange I never thought of that. Yes, that will be the thing to do."

"I think so; well, tell your men what we intend doing. I will give my men the order."

"Very well," and Royston strode away to the cabins, and informed his men of what was to be done.

They were glad to know that they were to have the assistance of the redcoats in the expected encounter with the dreaded 'Liberty Boys,' and were delighted when they thought that it was possible they might take the youths by surprise and almost wipe them off the face of the earth.

"That will be all right," said one. "We may be able to get even with the rebels for what they did to us awhile ago."

"You are right," said Royston. "Well, come along, boys.

We will get ready for the 'Liberty Boys,' and if they come, it will be a bad thing for them."

* * * * *

Dick Slater did not have to wait more than half an hour, after the disappearance of the redcoats, led by Royston, and then the "Liberty Boys" put in an appearance.

"Ah, you are here ahead of us, eh?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes."

"Been here long?"

"Oh, perhaps half an hour."

"So long as that?"

"Yes."

"Did you enter Beaufort?"

"Yes."

"What luck did you have?"

"Very good. I found out enough for our needs, I think."

"Good."

"I was discovered and chased out of the town, however."

"You were?" eagerly.

"Yes; a party of perhaps forty redcoats followed me, but I dodged them, and I saw them enter the pathway yonder, half an hour ago, and disappear."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Do you suppose they are suspicious that their friends, the members of the Loyal Legion, may be attacked by us, and have gone there to render them assistance in case they are attacked?"

"Yes; I am confident that is their object in going there, for Royston was with them."

"He was?"

"Yes; indeed, it was he that caused me to be chased out of Beaufort. He told them that the probability was that I was in the town, spying, and that led to my discovery."

"The scoundrel. He must have followed you to Beaufort."

"Yes; I had been there only a little while when he arrived, at any rate."

"Well, we will be able to thrash the entire gang, Loyal Legion, redcoats, and all."

"Yes; at any rate, we will make the attempt."

"That's the way to talk."

"I suppose Sam got started for Charleston, all right, Bob?"

"Yes; he didn't delay only long enough to get a fresh horse, Dick."

"Good! Well, he will get there in time, if such a thing is possible."

"Yes; there won't be any grass grow under his horse's hoofs while he is on the road."

"Well, if you boys are ready, we may as well start for the scene of action," said Dick. "Forward, all, and follow me in single file."

He rode toward the edge of the timber, followed by the rest of the "Liberty Boys," and just as he was on the point of entering the pathway two figures suddenly appeared before him, and a voice said:

"Hold. Do not go ahead just yet. If you are the 'Liberty Boys,' wait, for you will be riding to your death if you go on."

CHAPTER IX.

TURNING THE TABLES.

Dick brought his horse to a stop at once, and bending forward in his saddle gazed searchingly at the two figures in front of him. The moon had come up a short time before, but had been behind a cloud; but at this instant the clouds drifted away, and by the light suddenly thrown upon the scene Dick saw that a boy of eighteen or nineteen and a girl of perhaps seventeen years stood before him.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"We are friends of yours—that is, if you are the 'Liberty Boys,' sir," was the reply.

"Well, we are the 'Liberty Boys'; but how did you know we were in these parts?"

"We heard your names mentioned."

"Who by?"

"The Tories and redcoats."

"Ah, by the Tories and redcoats, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"About a mile back in the timber."

"Where the three cabins are?"

"Yes; you have been there?"

"Yes; earlier this evening."

"Are you on your way to attack the redcoats and Tories?"

"We are."

"Well, if we had not met you, you would have gone to your death."

"How is that?"

"Well, they are expecting you."

"They are?"

"Yes."

"We expected that."

"I know; but did you expect that they would prepare an ambuscade for you?"

"No, we didn't expect that."

"Well, then, you would have been taken by surprise. You thought they would be in the cabins, waiting to fight you off, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, they are not in the cabins at all."

"Where are they?"

"In the edge of the timber, this way from the cabins."

"Ah, they are, eh?"

"Yes; and they are stretched along on both sides of the pathway leading to the basin in which the cabins stand."

"Ha! that is a very good scheme, indeed."

"If you and your men had marched along, to the edge of the basin, the redcoats and Tories would have had you between two fires, and would have wiped you out, almost, at one volley."

"You are right, and we are indeed very much obliged to you for giving us this information."

"You are more than welcome."

"You have not told me who you are."

"My name is Tom Holmes, and this is my sister Mary."

"Well, Tom and Mary, we are glad to know you. You are patriots, of course."

"Yes, sir."

"And live near here?"

"About a mile to the north of here."

"How came you to know about the Tories and redcoats?"

"In this way: I discovered, two weeks ago, that the cabins had been built in the basin, and as a natural result we have been very curious regarding who was to occupy them. I have kept pretty close watch, and have seen a few men there, off and on, and managed to hear enough of their talk so that I understood that they were Tories, and that they were expecting a big gathering of Tories in a week or so."

"Exactly."

"Well, sister and I have been visiting over at a neighbor's home to-day, and when we started to come home, Mary said to me, 'Let's go past the cabins in the basin, and see if the Tories have gathered there in numbers,' and I was willing, so we came past."

"Yes?"

"There did not seem to be anybody there when we got there; but we had been hidden in the edge of the timber but a little while when a party of redcoats entered the basin, and a lot of Tories came out of the cabins. Mary

and I held our places, and watched and listened, and as it happened the head man of the Tories and the captain in command of the redcoats had a talk near enough where we were concealed so that we could understand what was said, and we heard them talking about the 'Liberty Boys,' who, they said, would probably come there and make an attack, and the captain suggested that they arrange an ambuscade, and take you by surprise when you came. We stole away, soon after that, and came this way in the hope that we might meet you, in order to warn you of your danger."

"You have done well, and we thank you sincerely."

"As I said before, you are more than welcome."

"Now that we have a knowledge of their plan, we shall be able to spoil it."

"So I judged."

Dick at once had a talk with Bob and the other youths, and it was decided to lead the horses into the timber, and tie them, and then advance on foot; by so doing they would be enabled to make a circuit, and get out around the waiting Tories and redcoats.

The horses were led into the timber and tied, and then the youths got ready for the adventure. Tom Holmes asked Dick to be permitted to accompany them.

"But what about your sister?" Dick asked.

"She will stay here with the horses till we come back; she is not afraid."

"Very well; you may go with us, then, if you wish."

This pleased Tom immensely, and when he had been placed on an equality with the youths by having four pistols and a knife given him from the reserve stock of weapons in the saddle-bags, he was delighted.

"You are sure you will not be afraid to stay here alone, Miss Mary?" asked Dick of the maiden.

"Oh, yes; I shall not be afraid, Mr. Slater," was the reply.

"Very well; but it may be two or three hours before we return."

"That doesn't matter. I will remain till you do come."

The youths now set out, and proceeded along the path till they were within a quarter of a mile of the basin, and then they turned aside and made a wide circuit, and approached the basin from one side, and almost opposite the end of the log cabin nearest them, instead of from the front.

Here they paused to reconnoiter a bit before venturing to enter the basin.

Nothing was seen of any of the Tories or redcoats, however.

"I guess they are all over in the timber, by the path, wait-

ing for us to come along and be butchered," said Dick to Bob.

"I guess you are right, Dick. Well, shall we enter the basin?"

"Yes; we will slip across as soon as the moon goes under that cloud, yonder, and take up our positions behind the cabins. Then, when the enemy gets tired of waiting for us and starts to return to the cabins, we will greet them with a hail of bullets."

"That's a good scheme, and ought to make it easy for us to thrash them."

"I think so. Well, we will move across, and take up our positions back of the cabins now."

The youth gave the command, and the "Liberty Boys" stole across the open space, and were soon safely ensconced behind the cabins. The cloud had obscured the moon, and they did not believe they had been seen.

In thus thinking they were undoubtedly right, for there was no sound from the timber out in front—which would not have been the case had their presence been discovered.

The youths made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and waited patiently.

One hour passed.

No move from the enemy out in front.

Another hour passed.

Still all was quiet.

"Jove, I wonder if they are going to stay out there all night and wait for us?" whispered Bob to Dick.

"I hardly think so. I have an idea they will get tired, give up looking for us, and come back here pretty soon."

"I hope so—ah! they are coming now."

The moon was shining brightly now, and peering around the corner of the cabin, Dick saw that Bob had spoken truly; the Tories and redcoats were emerging from the timber and starting across the open space.

The signal for the "Liberty Boys" to get ready was given by Dick, and with cocked muskets the youths waited for the signal to fire.

Closer and closer came the enemy.

They were talking in disappointed tones, and discussing the failure of the "Liberty Boys" to put in an appearance.

"We would have wiped them out of existence if they had put in an appearance," said the commander of the redcoats.

"You are right," agreed Royston, who was walking beside him. "I am sorry they did not come."

"But they did come—they are here!" suddenly cried Dick, in a loud, ringing voice; "fire, 'Liberty Boys'!"

Instantly the youths obeyed.

Crash—roar!

A hundred muskets spoke in certain terms, and instantly the scene was transformed from a quiet one to a scene of the utmost confusion.

Nearly half the force of the enemy went down, dead and wounded, and on the air rose the shrieks and groans of the wounded, the yells of the frightened and the curses of the more desperate and angry.

"Give them another volley," cried Dick, his voice being heard through the babel of noises, and again the "Liberty Boys" obeyed, it being a pistol-volley this time; but so close were they to the enemy that great damage was done.

The rest of the Tories and redcoats whirled and fled for their lives, making for the edge of the timber, over to the left.

"Out, boys, and give them another volley!" cried Dick, and the youths did so, bringing down a number of the fleeing men.

Then he gave the order for the youths to see if there were any wounded men in the cabins.

This was done, and as there were none there, he gave the order that the cabins be set on fire.

The "Liberty Boys" obeyed, and a few minutes later the cabins were burning briskly.

Having accomplished all that they expected to accomplish, the youths took their departure, and made their way back to where their horses were.

"Well, have you been much frightened while we were away?" asked Dick of Mary.

"Oh, no, sir," was the reply. "I was a bit nervous when I heard the firing, for I thought it might be possible that the Tories and redcoats had surprised you after all."

"We surprised them, as we figured on doing."

"I am glad of that."

"We owe our good fortune to yourself and brother."

"Well, we are both very glad to have been able to do something for the great cause."

The youths bade Tom and Mary good-bye, and mounting their horses, rode away in the direction of the patriot encampment, while the youth and his sister took a short cut for their home.

Tom and Mary were considerably excited, and when they got home they had a wonderful story to tell their parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Holmes had been somewhat alarmed by the extended absence of their son and daughter, but forgot their anxiety in listening to the wonderful story the two had to tell.

"So the cabins were burned by the 'Liberty Boys'?" said Mr. Holmes. "I'm glad of that, as it may result in the

Tories taking themselves away from this part of the country."

"I think it will put a stop to their work, father," said Tom, "for the 'Liberty Boys' struck them such a hard blow they will not be strong enough to do very much."

"I'm glad of it."

"So am I; and just think, father and mother, I went with the 'Liberty Boys' and helped fight the Tories and redcoats."

"That is something to be proud of, Tom," said his father.

"I'm thankful you were not killed, Tom," from his mother.

"I tell you, the redcoats and Tories didn't have any chance to do us hurt," said Tom. "They expected to take us by surprise, but we took them by surprise instead, and we gave it to them so hot and heavy that they could think of nothing save getting to a place of safety."

When the "Liberty Boys" got back to the patriot encampment, and told Colonel Campbell how successful they had been in striking the Tories and redcoats he was very well pleased, and complimented them highly.

"That will do nicely for a starter, in our campaign against the British at Beaufort," he said.

The youths threw themselves down and secured a very good night's rest, and were up bright and early next morning, and ready for a move against the British.

Soon after breakfast the patriots broke camp, and marched toward Beaufort.

They were within a mile of the town at ten o'clock, and Colonel Campbell directed Dick to take his "Liberty Boys" and push forward and see how strong the outposts of the enemy were.

The youths were ready and willing to do this work.

They felt that it was a great honor to be given the dangerous work to do.

They advanced till they were almost to the edge of the town.

Then they dismounted, and moved slowly and cautiously forward on foot.

At the point where they were approaching stood two houses. They were on the edge of a little slope, and between the houses were steps. As they advanced, they kept back to one side, so as to be out of range of the bullets of the redcoats should they fire a volley. This the enemy did not do, however, and the youths hardly knew what to think about it.

Presently one of the redcoats called out: "Come down here, 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Oh, we would rather not," replied Dick, who at once suspected a trap.

"Oh, come along," in a sneering voice.

"No, thank you. We are comfortable here."

"You are afraid to come," in a taunting voice.

"No, I don't think we are afraid to come," Dick replied.

"Yes you are, or you would come. We dare you to come."

Dick looked around upon the faces of his comrades. He saw that all were eager to accept the dare.

"What do you say, fellows?" he asked.

"Let's accept the dare, Dick!" said Bob eagerly. "I believe they are trying to scare us out more than anything else. Let's go for them, and back them down."

"All right; be ready, and when I give the signal, go for them."

The youths nodded. Dick believed that there was not a very large number of redcoats at hand. This was the extreme edge of the town, and the main force of the enemy was back in the center of the town.

Suddenly Dick gave the signal.

It was obeyed instantly.

The "Liberty Boys" rushed down the steps, and attacked the redcoats fiercely, firing as they went. The British resisted to the best of their ability, but were forced to beat a hasty retreat.

It was as Dick had suspected; there was only comparatively a small force here, and they did not stop, but kept right on retreating till they were safe among their comrades, where the main force was.

The youths remained where they were, and waited till Colonel Campbell and the main force came up, and then a council was held.

It was decided to divide the force into three parties, one to go to the right, one to the left, and the other straight ahead.

When all the arrangements had been made, the parties moved, and advanced upon the redcoats.

Fifteen minutes later the engagement was on in earnest, and the rattle of musketry was heard on all hands.

but the enemy had fortified their position so well, and fought so fiercely that it was impossible to succeed, and at last the colonel sounded the signal for a retreat.

The "Liberty Boys" had fought with great vim and energy, and had done good work, but the militia had not done so well, and it was mainly owing to their half-hearted efforts that the attempt to capture Beaufort had to be abandoned.

The patriot force withdrew to a safe distance, and the casualties were reckoned up. Quite a number of patriots had been killed or wounded, and among them were some of the brave "Liberty Boys," but all felt that the British had suffered fully as much.

Colonel Campbell and Dick Slater held a council, and discussed the matter of making another attack.

It was decided to not make another attack that day, at least, and the force moved back to the edge of the timber, half a mile distant, and went into camp.

That night the patriot force slipped into the town, and again made an attempt to capture it, but were repulsed, and had to return to the encampment.

Next day they made still another attack, and again were unsuccessful.

Again Dick and the colonel held a council.

"It looks as if we would have to give it up, Dick," said the colonel sadly.

"Yes; they are too strongly intrenched for us, colonel," replied Dick. "They have the rifle-pits all around the square in the center of the town, and when they are down in the trenches they are well protected, and we are unable to do them much damage, while they have a good chance at us."

"Yes; I fear we shall have to give up, and return to Charleston, though I hate to do so."

"Yes; it is not pleasant to be forced to return and report failure, but I think it is the best thing to do."

"There comes Sam," exclaimed Bob Estabrook, and all looked and saw Sam Sanderson riding toward them.

"Good! Now we will learn whether or not he got to Charleston in time."

Sam rode up and leaping to the ground, advanced to where Dick and Bob stood.

"Have you attacked the British yet, Dick?" he asked, eagerly.

"Three times, Sam," was the reply.

"And you——"

"Failed to make them surrender, Sam."

"That is too bad."

"Yes. But, say, did you get to Charleston in time?"

CHAPTER X.

A LIVELY ENCOUNTER.

Colonel Campbell and his force made a determined attempt to capture the British, or force them to surrender,

"Just in time, Dick."

"You mean, that——"

"I rode straight to headquarters, Dick, and told General Lincoln what we had learned regarding the plot to blow up the headquarters building. Well, they vacated the building at once, and we had just got away when there was a terrible explosion, and the building went up in the air."

Exclamations of horror escaped the lips of the hearers.

"What if you had been half an hour later in getting here, Sam!" exclaimed Dick.

"Well, General Lincoln and his officers would have been blown to fragments, Dick."

After this subject of conversation had been exhausted, the one of making another attack on Beaufort was taken up.

Sam's coming had caused Dick and the colonel to open the matter once more, though they had thought it closed before he put in an appearance.

Dick realized that Sam would be greatly disappointed at not getting to take part in the engagements against the British, and it was decided, finally, to make one more attack.

"We will wait till to-night, however," said Dick; "for we might learn something that would be of value. He did so. He discovered that a large party of redcoats was advancing, with the intention of making an attack on the patriot force.

He hastened back to the encampment with the information, and the patriot force retired, and the men took up positions behind trees.

"I think we will be enabled to get even with them now," said Dick to Colonel Campbell, and the officer said he thought so, and hoped so.

The British supposed that the enemy was unsuspecting of the danger threatening, and when they were close up to where the camp-fires were burning they made a sudden dash forward.

They were almost in the encampment before discovering that there was no enemy there to attack, and then there came a withering volley from the trees beyond, and a goodly number of the redcoats fell, dead and wounded.

The surprisers had been surprised, and as the patriots rushed forward, firing as they came, and yelling, the redcoats turned and fled at the top of their speed. One party of perhaps seventy-five was headed off and captured, and this gave Dick and Colonel Campbell a great deal of satisfaction, for they well knew that there were a number of patriot soldiers prisoners in the hands of the enemy, and now they would be in a position to offer to exchange prisoners.

The British made no further attempt at attacking. The one attempt had been enough to satisfy them.

The patriot soldiers buried the dead, attended to the wounded as best they could, and then, when morning came, Dick and Colonel Campbell counted the redcoats they had captured, and Bob was sent to the town as a messenger, under a flag of truce.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I have come to say that we have a goodly number of your men prisoners," replied Bob, "and am authorized to make you an offer to exchange for our men whom you have prisoners."

"How many of our men have you?"

"Eighty-three."

"Will you exchange even with us—I mean will you let us have all of our men back if we will let you have all of yours?"

"How many of our men have you?"

"Seventy-two."

"Seventy-two, eh?"

"Yes."

There was an anxious look on the redcoat's face; it was evident that he feared Bob would not be willing to accept his proposition.

The "Liberty Boy" pondered a few moments. Then he said:

"All right; we will do it. I consider that our seventy-two men are worth as much as your eighty-three, so am willing to make the exchange on that basis."

The redcoat flushed, but did not make any retort, for he feared that if he were to anger Bob the youth might change his mind, and insist on exchanging man for man, which would leave eleven redcoats prisoners in the patriots' hands.

"It is settled, then," he said, as calmly as he could. "Go back and bring our men half-way, and we will meet you with your men, and the exchange can be effected."

"Very well. We will do as you suggest."

The two turned and made their way back to their respective forces, and soon the work of exchanging prisoners was gone through with.

When it had been accomplished, Dick and Colonel Campbell held another council.

The matter for discussion was whether they should make another attempt to capture the British in Beaufort, or give it up and retire.

It was decided to not make any further attempt, and they broke camp and made their way back in the direction of Charleston.

As they could travel much more rapidly than the in-

fantry, Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" did not start at the same time, but went off on a reconnoitering expedition.

The youths wished to learn whether or not the cabins in the basin, where the members of the Loyal Legion had had their headquarters had really burned down or not, and whether any of the Tories still remained in the neighborhood.

So they turned aside from the main road and made their way to the basin. The cabins were a mass of ruins, and nowhere was there a sign of any Tories or other human beings other than the "Liberty Boys" themselves.

As it was late, they decided to camp there for the night, and did so. In accordance with his invariable custom, Dick placed out sentinels, so that it would be impossible for an enemy to surprise them.

They ate their suppers, and an hour later lay down and went to sleep. They slept for hours, and were at last awakened, about three o'clock, by the sharp report of a musket.

The "Liberty Boys" leaped up, weapons in hand, and the next instant the sentinels came rushing into camp, with the information that a large force was advancing.

There were a large number of partially-consumed logs lying in the ruins of the cabins—the wood had been more, or less green when the cabins were built—and these were hastily piled up in such a manner as to form a splendid breastworks for the youths, and they took up their position behind the logs.

The next moment, almost, after they had taken their places, a dark mass was seen coming across the open space, and waiting till it was close enough so that good execution could be done, Dick gave the order for the youths to fire.

They obeyed, instantly, and the crash of the musket-shots awoke the echoes for miles around.

Great damage was done, and the redcoats and Tories went down like wheat before the scythe. With yells of rage, the redcoats and Tories returned the fire, but they did but very little damage, the youths being protected by the logs.

The "Liberty Boys" fired four pistol-volleys, one right after the other, with the result that the enemy was brought to a standstill, and then, as with wild yells the youths leaped over the breastworks and dashed upon the redcoats with the fury of demons, the attacking party that had been, took to its heels—what there was left of it.

Again the "Liberty Boys" had been victorious. They took as good care of the wounded as they could, and when daylight came, they buried the dead.

Dick sent Bob back to Beaufort, and under a flag of truce

he met one of the redcoats at the edge of the town, and told him to come and get the wounded.

"Very well; and thank you," said the redcoat, and he rode back and told the British commander what Bob had said, while the "Liberty Boy" rode back to where his comrades were awaiting his coming.

Among the dead that had been buried by the "Liberty Boys" that morning was Ronald Royston, the leader of the Loyal Legion, and Dick was not sorry to see that the scoundrel had met with what the youth considered to be an easy death.

Just as they were getting ready to start, Tom Holmes put in an appearance.

"I heard the firing this morning," he explained, "and as soon as I could get away I came over to see what had been going on."

"We had another encounter with the enemy," said Dick "but we utilized those half-consumed logs for breastworks and had no trouble in thrashing the British and Tories."

"I am glad of that, Dick. What are you going to do with these wounded men?"

"The British will soon be here and take them away."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes. Well, we must be going. Good-bye, Tom."

Then the "Liberty Boys" rode away, and with a wave of the hand, Tom turned and made his way back to his home.

There was a slightly sad look in Mary's eyes when Tom told her the "Liberty Boys" had gone from that part of the country; but then Tom was sorry they were gone, the same as his sister was.

The "Liberty Boys" returned to Charleston, temporarily but soon departed, to seek fresh fields for their wonderful genius for fighting for Liberty and Independence.

THE END.

The next number (94) of "The Liberty Boys of '76," will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' BEST BLOWS; OR, BEATING THE BRITISH AT BENNINGTON," by Harry Moore.

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